



**Quarterly Report
MONTENEGRO:
POLITICAL PARTY BUILDING
AND CIVIC DEVELOPMENT
USAID Cooperative Agreement No: EE-A-00-98-00028-00
January 1 to March 31, 2002**

I. SUMMARY

After four months of negotiations between Serbia and Montenegro with the participation of the European Union's High Representative Javier Solana, President Milo Djukanovic and Prime Minister Filip Vujanovic signed an agreement on March 14 that outlines the basis for a redefined state called Serbia and Montenegro and provides the opportunity for either member state to initiate efforts to secede after three years. Djukanovic's return to Podgorica with a signed agreement was a surprise to the pro-independence Montenegrins, especially the Liberal Alliance in Montenegro (LSCG) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP). Both parties announced their intention to withdraw their support from the current government, which had been formed on the promise of a referendum in May 2002. As a result, protracted discussions on a cabinet reshuffle or early parliamentary elections are now underway. Meanwhile, as the parties negotiate and debate the redefinition of relations between Serbia and Montenegro in the parliament, they also must plan for local elections to be held in 19 of the 21 municipalities¹ on May 15.

Montenegro's transition to democracy requires strong political and governing institutions that can provide for transparency, accountability, representation and citizen participation. The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) is committed to supporting democratic reforms in Montenegro as it addresses the continued need for internal political liberalization. The long-term goal of NDI's Montenegro program is to strengthen Montenegro's emerging democratic political system through increased organizational capacity of and improved public outreach by political parties, and through the initiation of direct participation in the political process by nongovernmental organizations as a means to promote civil society and broad-based citizen participation in political affairs. The Institute received a no-cost extension of its regional cooperative agreement through July 31, 2002, but anticipates completing activities in Montenegro and exhausting funds by April 30, 2002.

NDI conducted the following activities this quarter:

¹ Voting will not take place in Podgorica and Herceg Novi because extraordinary local elections were held there in June 2000.

- Consultations with the leadership of the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS), the People's Party (NS), and the Socialists People's Party (SNP) on incorporating polling trends when developing long-term strategic communication plans;
- Multiparty training seminar with women political party activities on preparing for the municipal elections;
- The fifth and sixth tracking political party polls with key findings - the economy still rates as the most important issue of concern - and party specific results were distributed;
- A baseline assessment of the parliament;
- A training for SDP municipal branch leaders from 15 municipalities on activating the party branch; and
- Newsletter produced focusing on political responsibility, women in politics and local elections, and roles and responsibilities of Members of Parliament (MPs), which was distributed to 900 political leaders and activists in Montenegro (attached).

Specific results identified this quarter include the following:

- Increasing focus of parties on economic issues as demonstrated in public statements and media events; and
- Center for Democratic Transition's (CDT) examination of the voter registry for an alleged illegitimate removal of 600 voters enhanced its reputation within the international community.

II. BACKGROUND

Mounting speculation of an independence referendum in Montenegro came to an end when President Milo Djukanovic and Prime Minister Filip Vujanovic signed an agreement on the future relations between Serbia and Montenegro in the early hours of March 14.² According to the agreement, which requires approval from the Serbian, Montenegrin and federal parliaments, a redefined state called Serbia and Montenegro would be created with some joint institutions, but each republic would have the right to withdraw from the union after three years.³

Signing of the agreement shocked the Liberal Alliance in Montenegro (LSCG), which supports the minority government, and Social Democratic Party (SDP), a junior coalition partner to the ruling Democratic Party of Socialist. The LSCG announced the withdrawal of its support

² Other signatories include FRY president Vojislav Kostunica, FRY deputy Premier Miroljub Labus, Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic, and European Union High Representative for external and security policies, Javier Solana.

³ The main provisions stipulate that the newly reconstituted state would share joint parliament, president, Ministerial Council and court institutions. The president would be elected by a single chamber parliament and would nominate the Council of Ministers consisting of five departments: foreign affairs, defense, international and internal economic relations, and the protection of human and minority rights. A joint army would be commanded by the Supreme Defense Council consisting of three presidents (from Serbia, Montenegro and the joint state), and the Council would pass decisions by consensus. The current economic reforms are the starting point for development of a common market enabling the free flow of people, goods, services and capital, and harmonization with the EU economic system is expected to overcome existing differences.

to the minority government, which has led to negotiations to reshuffle the cabinet. Similarly, the SDP announced that it would withdraw its ministers from government once the agreement is ratified by the Montenegrin parliament. Leveraging its powerful position in the current political climate, LSCG is expected to demand the post of prime minister and the endorsement of the LSCG presidential candidate for the November 2002 presidential elections. Should negotiations fail, extraordinary parliamentary elections would be called, likely benefiting the pro-federation parties – Socialist People's Party (SNP), People's Party (NS) and Serbian People's Party (SNS).

The Montenegrin parliament began discussing the agreement on March 26. The agreement will likely be ratified with the votes of the ruling pro-independence DPS and pro-federation parties SNP, NS, and SNS. Despite their agreement on the principle of the document, the two sides have found areas in which to disagree, including the election of delegates to the federal parliament. According to the agreement, all differences on these issues must be settled by the end of June, which is the deadline for submitting a new Constitutional Charter to the individual parliaments for debate.

As the parties negotiate and debate the redefinition of relations between Serbia and Montenegro, they also must contend with the demands of an election campaign. The pro-federation bloc announced that the three parties would jointly participate in the local elections, but that municipal boards will separately agree on the division of power in each municipality. As of this writing, the pro-independence bloc has not announced if it will run on the same ballot. It is likely that the SDP and the DPS will form a coalition, and LSCG will compete independently as was the case in the 2001 extraordinary parliamentary elections.

The success of Montenegro's democratization process will be determined by the degree to which it constructs a multiparty political system based on accountability, transparency, and representation. To this end, NDI is conducting a program to strengthen Montenegro's emerging democratic political system through increased organizational capacity of and improved public outreach by political parties, and through the initiation of direct participation in the political process by nongovernmental organizations as a means to promote civil society and broad-based citizen participation in political affairs.

The specific objectives of NDI's program are the following:

- Political parties begin to implement democratic forms of internal debate and decision-making;
- Political parties increase their direct contact with voters and solicit and respond to feedback from the grassroots on party positions;
- Party municipal branches and other functional units (i.e., women's groups, youth chapters, etc.) become more active in the life of the party;
- Parties become more open to political participation of women and youth;
- Political parties improve the work of their caucuses inside parliament and more effectively integrate the caucus into general party activities including voter contact and media strategies;

- Political parties identify and respond to citizen priorities in their platforms and in their policies put forward either as parliamentary members of the government or opposition; and
- Existing nonpartisan advocacy organizations become effective watchdog institutions and advocates for an accountable and transparent parliament and government.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Political Party Building

Activating Local Party Branches

At the request of Miodrag Ilickovic, MP and SDP vice-president for organization, NDI conducted a two-day training seminar for SDP members of the municipal boards on reviving and activating the branches in advance of the May 15 municipal elections. Twenty participants, including four women, attended the March 2 to 3 seminar from the following municipalities: Budva, Herceg Novi, Kotor, Bar, Cetinje, Podgorica, Niksic, Kolasin, Mojkovac, Rozaje, Bijelo Polje, and Pljevlja. In addition to motivating the municipal party leaderships, the seminar provided leaders with techniques on election planning, small-scale fundraising and message development.

Activating Women Candidates for Local Elections

On March 24, NDI conducted a multiparty training seminar for women party activists in advance of the local elections. The seminar focused on recruiting and training women candidates for the upcoming local elections and tips for gaining an electable position on the party list, as well as long-term strategies for electing more women to public office. A total of 19 participants attended the seminar with the breakdown of party affiliation as follows: the SDP – 5, the NS – 4, the DPS – 3, the DUA – 2, the SNP – 2, and the LSCG – 3.

An important point emphasized throughout the seminar was that the women had to organize within the party and develop messages and strategies for reaching the goal of more women in elected positions. The intended message was that the continued, ineffective effort to have a quota inserted into the election law would not solve the problem of women's representation in politics. Instead, it required internal party reform. Participants found the seminar interesting and engaging and were motivated to try some of the suggested techniques.⁴

Leadership Consultations on Written Communication Strategies

In late March, NDI conducted single-party communications consultations with the leadership and party spokesmen from the DPS, the SNP, and the NS.⁵ The goal of each session was to apply trends shown in seven NDI polls since March 2001 to strengthen the ability of parties to develop messages geared toward their voting body and to assist them with developing

⁴ The publication of the candidate lists after 20 April will reveal how successful the women were in their endeavor.

⁵ Due to parties' scheduling conflicts, consultations with the SDP and LSCG were moved to April.

a three-year strategy for growth. The consultations focused on analyzing polling trends, targeting voters and creating written communication plans. A summary of the individual party training is below.

Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS)

Six members of the DPS executive board, including its president and the president of the youth council, participated in the consultations. The session began by analyzing the results of the polls, the characteristics of DPS' hard-core and swing voters and the opportunities for growth. Techniques for developing these growth opportunities over a three-year period using examples from Canada and the United States were shared with the participants. A significant amount of discussion focused on the importance that voters place on the economic situation, jobs and start-up of industry – and, the need for the party to develop some policy-based campaigns (outside of election periods) to advance solutions to these voter concerns. Participants were highly engaged in the discussion and expressed the belief that the session had been useful and practical.

Socialists People's Party (SNP)

Three MPs and members of the party's executive board, including the party spokesperson and the chief whip of the parliamentary group, participated in this consultation. The session followed the pattern used in the DPS consultations – with a heavy focus on how to turn voter concerns about the economy into concrete policy programs and campaigns.

In contrast to the DPS session, the SNP leaders seemed to miss the point of developing a long-term strategy for positioning the party in the minds of the voters. This result is somewhat understandable though in these volatile political times, since the SNP is focused on seizing power in the next six months. It is hoped that some of the ideas presented will, nevertheless, become a part of the SNP communications plan in the future.

People's Party (NS)

Two members of the party youth council and a MP participated in this consultation, which followed the same pattern as the two previous consultations. While copious notes were taken during the session, it is not expected that there will be a large impact on the future NS communication strategy. Unfortunately, the promised participants – higher level party decision makers – could not find the time to attend. Nevertheless, two of the three participants are clearly emerging leaders in the party. The knowledge gained during the session will help to establish their credibility and authority with party leaders in the future.

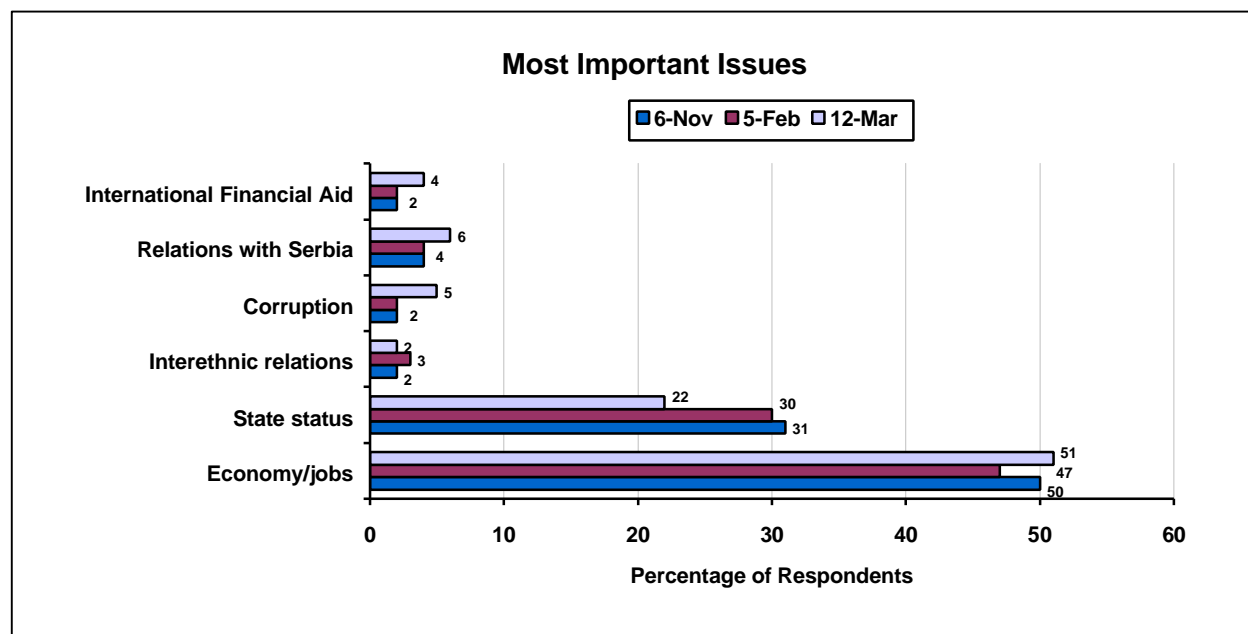
Political Party Polling

NDI fielded the fifth and sixth tracking surveys in each of Montenegro's 21 municipalities in February and March, respectively, to determine voters' attitudes on independence, party-based messaging, and Montenegrin affairs, including quality of life issues. NDI presented party specific reports to representatives of the Liberal Alliance of Montenegro

(LSCG), the Socialist People's Party (SNP), the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS), the Social Democratic Party (SDP), and the People's Party (NS). NDI shared a report on the key findings to USAID and other interested international organizations, and a press release was issued to the media in Montenegro. Additionally, the key findings were sent to the three other parliamentary parties - Serb People's Party (SNS), Democratic Union of Albanians (DUA), and Democratic Alliance in Montenegro (DSCG) - whose support is too small to enable a party-specific analysis of their voting body. In addition, for the sixth tracking survey, NDI provided a special briefing for the Minister of Tourism.

The findings of the fifth tracking survey show that yet again the economy continues to be the most important issue for citizens when deciding for whom to vote. In this poll, the importance of economic issues, which includes the economic situation, unemployment and start-up of industry, remained high at 47 percent. The most important economic reform priorities for introducing a market economy were identified as anti-corruption laws (33 percent), privatization (21 percent) and laws to encourage foreign investment (18 percent). The next most important issue is Montenegro's state status at 30 percent. All other issues identified as most important in making the electoral choice were chosen by less than 4 percent of respondents.

As shown in the graph, the significant role of the economy did not change in the sixth



tracking survey and even increased by 12 percent. The next most important issue is Montenegro's state status at 22 percent, an 8 percent decrease since the February poll. Regarding the recently concluded negotiations on the future of Montenegro and Serbia, 71 percent of respondents expressed support for the dialogue. In terms of the issues under discussion for a redefined relationship between the two republics, 93 percent of respondents identified freedom to travel, reside, work and study in either republic as an important issue, followed by 90 percent who identified quick integration into the European Union as important. Seventy-one (71) percent identified locating some federal institutions in Montenegro as important.

Each of the tracking surveys had a focus on a specific issue. In February, the poll explored the attitude of respondents on the participation of women in politics, finding that 75 percent felt that the parties did not do a good job representing the interests of women and that 62 percent believed women were ineffective political representatives at the moment in Montenegro. Nevertheless, 61 percent of respondents expressed a desire to see more women in elected positions. In March, the poll explored the work of the current municipal governments and their most important functions. Respondents from the northern municipalities (Niksic, Pljevlja, Pluzine, Savnik and Zabljak) were most dissatisfied with their local governments, while respondents from the eastern municipalities (Andrijevisa, Berane, Bijelo Polje, Kolasin, Mojkovac, Plav and Rozaje) were most satisfied. The most important functions of local government were judged to be preserving social order and security, and maintaining and improving the local infrastructure.

“These are very helpful polls. We now have one year worth of data, which begins from the moment that we began to renew our party” (reference to the February 2001 SNP Congress that ousted Momir Bulatovic).

~Vuksan Simonovic, Chief Whip, Socialist People’s Party

“I understand the ideas of your polls. It is the economy that concerns the voters and we need to address ourselves to the economic concerns of the voters.”

~Dragan Soc, President, People’s Party

After explaining the importance of the economy to the voters, the minister responded: “Aha, so that is why the Liberals are always talking about the economy!”

~Predrag Nenezic, Minister of Tourism

Parliamentary Baseline

In late January, NDI met with parliamentary leadership, parliamentary staff, and individual caucus leaders and members to assess the operations and functions of the parliament.⁶ Based on the meetings, NDI found that: (1) there is interest in establishing a legislative management committee; (2) there is interest in changing the rules of procedure, and the involvement of NDI as a “mediator” in the process would be useful and welcome; (3) almost all interlocutors agree that parliament is ineffective and that the primary causes are a weak committee system and live broadcasts of plenary sessions in their entirety, providing a campaign stump for members; and (4) the staff are underutilized and burdened with inefficient administrative tasks that could be quickly accomplished with the introduction of computer equipment.

Member of Parliament (MP) Delegation to the U.S.

In mid-February, NDI planned a half-day of meetings on Capitol Hill for a Meridian International-organized delegation of 14 Montenegrin MPs. The delegates met with congressional staff members Jason Steinbaum (chief of staff for Elliot Engel) and Tom Bridle (senior policy advisor for Jane Harman) and later on with political consultant and former legislative staff member Maura Keefe. The meetings focused on three issues: 1) forms and benefits of basic public outreach and building community relations with minimal resources; 2) examples and results of effective oversight that demonstrate how committees investigate alleged

⁶ While NDI/Montenegro has an excellent working relationship with almost all of the party clubs and a large majority of the MPs, NDI had not yet had an opportunity to meet the staff.

corruption; and 3) examples of how notions of political responsibility impact an elected official's behavior, rhetoric and/or actions. The delegates were also able to visit the House chamber and observe the debate on campaign finance reform. The delegation appreciated the chance to meet the staff of high ranking members as the organizers were unable to schedule additional meetings on Capitol Hill.

NGO Development

Center for Democratic Transition (CDT)

NDI assisted CDT with the following projects during this quarter:

- *Voter Registry Verification*

At NDI's suggestion, the U.S. Embassy requested that CDT conduct a random sample spot-check of 600 names allegedly struck from the voter registry. Previously, the SNP voiced concerns to NDI, the OSCE and the U.S. Embassy about this issue and provided the three organizations with a list of missing names. In an effort to determine the validity of this complaint, CDT distributed a questionnaire to a random sample of 10 percent of the 600 names during the first week of January 2002. Using random sampling methodology provided by NDI, CDT sent out volunteers to query the residents in person about why their names had been removed from the list. Once NDI and CDT analyzed the results, CDT presented the following data to Embassy officials:

- 29 percent of those removed from this list had died in the last several months
- 27 percent of those removed from the list had moved
- 21 percent of those removed from the list are unknown at that address
- 13 percent of those removed from the list did not know they had been removed and could cite no reason for their removal
- 5 percent of those removed from the list could not be found despite repeated tries
- 3 percent of those removed from the list are actually on the current voter registry (despite SNP's evidence)

Of the overall sample, there was no overwhelming evidence of widespread efforts to disenfranchise voters. While it is certain that 13 percent were wrongly removed from the list (for unknown reasons) within that figure, there are 8 percent who moved abroad and should not have been struck from the list. Another 5 percent were unaware that they were not on the list anymore and could cite no reason. The political officers at the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade welcomed CDT's effort and praised the methodology used to correctly identify a scientific sample.

- *Election Preparation*

Once local elections were called, NDI focused its assistance on the group's election observation strategy. CDT envisions its election monitoring taking place in four phases: 1) the pre-campaign phase, which will include working with the Republic Election Commission to correct irregularities noted in the April 2001 parliamentary elections and monitoring voter

registration lists; 2) the campaign phase, which will focus on developing the Code of Conduct for political parties similar to the Code developed in advance of the April 2001 parliamentary elections and advertisements aimed at encouraging people to vote; 3) the election day phase, which will consist of monitoring at least 90 percent of polling stations; 4) and the post-election phase, which will consist of publishing a final report that provides a comprehensive account of CDT's activities.

Association of Young Journalists (AYJ)

During this quarter, NDI continued to consult with AYJ on a public media campaign to raise awareness of the new media law and encourage the public to demand compliance. The current version of the media law, supported by the Secretariat of Information, envisions no role for political parties in the broadcasting councils that will govern public media. AYJ advocated for and gained acceptance of the exclusion of parties based on its research of other European countries. The law is expected to pass in 2002. NDI also provided advice on developing a fundraising strategy, including a proposal for full-time media monitoring in advance of the next election, and assisting AYJ in conducting a similar public campaign on a journalist code of ethics.

Additionally, NDI provided advice on CDT's proposals to USAID's/Office of Transition Initiatives and the U.S. Embassy's Democracy Commission. AYJ received \$11,000 total from the two organizations.

Center for the Development of NGOs (CRNVO)

In late 2001, CRNVO produced the "Declaration of the Principles and Priorities of Cooperation between the State (Government, Parliament and Local Authorities) of the Republic of Montenegro and Non-Governmental Organizations." This document is to serve as a discussion piece in order to contribute to greater transparency of the government and parliament, as well as to improve cooperation between state institutions and the NGO sector. Although CRNVO published the declaration, asking for suggestions and comments from government and/or NGOs on several occasions, it received little response.

In an effort to solicit input more effectively from the government and NGO community, CRNVO requested NDI's assistance. NDI recommended the following: (1) divide the document into short-, medium- and long-term objectives; (2) target the specific people in the government or ministries who could help in achieving these objectives; and (3) develop coalitions with relevant NGOs who share similar interests in the achievement of the objectives. NDI also recommended dividing the declaration into principles and obligations and to clarify requests for government cooperation. After refining each paragraph of the declaration and identifying their short- and long-term objectives, CRNVO agreed that the immediate action would be to visit every NGO that they cooperate with to discuss further partnership on the declaration.

Since this consultation, the government (the deputy prime minister for political affairs) has met with CRNVO and accepted the principles. In addition, various coalitions have begun

working on several sub-sections of the priorities, including the law on conflict of interest and the law on political parties.

IV. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Objective: Political parties increase their direct contact with voters and solicit and respond to feedback from the grassroots on party positions.

- DPS MP and Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Gender Equality Nada Drobnjak distributed a simple calling card to 1,000 residents of Podgorica's bloc 5 and 6 (large apartment complexes). This holiday greeting included her contact information and invited citizens to communicate with her. NDI recommended this type of direct outreach to voters during its July 2001 orientation seminar for MPs and the November 2001 women's conference, which Drobnjak attended.

Objective: Political parties identify and respond to citizen priorities in their platforms and policies put forward either as members of the government or opposition.

- Political party spokespersons and party statements are beginning to reflect the importance of economy to citizens. NDI has repeatedly emphasized citizen interest in the economy based on poll results to political party members.

Objective: Existing nonpartisan advocacy organizations become effective watchdog institutions and advocates for an accountable and transparent parliament and government.

- CDT factually addressed an opposition allegation against the governing party and has illustrated that political disputes can be resolved by non-partisan authorities -- an important step in building public confidence in the political system.
- Vice President of the Parliament Rifat Rastoder requested additional copies of the Parliamentary Guide from CDT to distribute during his U.S. State Department-funded visit to the U.S (organized by Meridian International). NDI staff observed Vice President Rastoder provide copies to congressional staff members during meetings the Institute organized.

V. EVALUATION

AYJ

AYJ continues to demonstrate its ability to work more independently, with less assistance from NDI staff. AYJ released the results of its media monitoring from November 19 until December 15 at a press conference on 21 January. Results were prominently featured on television, in radio and in *Publika* and *Pobjeda* newspapers. NDI did not contribute to this report or the press conference, demonstrating AYJ's ability to implement the program independently.

However, NDI will continue to help AYJ shorten the time lag between the reporting period and the release of the report.

Staff Issues

This quarter, NDI hired two representatives, Velko Miloev and Freeman Che Pangborn. Miloev will assist CDT and AYJ with the election and media monitoring activities. He will arrive in Podgorica in early April and stay through the municipal elections. Pangborn will manage the Information Technology (IT) Assistance Program funded by the Dutch Government. This program complements NDI's ongoing work with the National Assembly by improving the skills of MPs and staff to use IT equipment to perform legislative operations and communicate with citizens. Pangborn arrived in early March and will stay through the end of November 2002.

NDI's short-term advisor, Cathy Westley, departed at the end of March. In the absence of a permanent field representative, Westley provided valuable and timely assistance to the NDI/Montenegro Director Lisa McLean with program implementation. NDI postponed the deployment of the second resident representative until next quarter when the new phase of NDI programming will commence and presumed greater political stability. This representative will work primarily with party caucuses in parliament and with party headquarters staff on such issues as internal communications, party structure, and handling the media.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

NDI will complete all the activities envisioned under its current grant during the month of April. In order to demonstrate progress in all 2001 program components, several of which were delayed due to unforeseen political events, NDI requested and received a no-cost extension for its political party and nonpartisan political activism development program from January 1 through April 30, 2002.⁷ During the month of April, NDI envisions fielding the remaining tracking poll and holding consultations with party caucuses in parliament on strengthening their outreach and communication skills. These activities will be noted in the forthcoming final report.

⁷ NDI received a no-cost extension through July 31, 2002, on its regional cooperative agreement (USAID No. EE-A-00-98-00028-00), which includes programs in Albania, Croatia, Macedonia, and Montenegro. However, NDI envisions completing program activities in Montenegro by April 30, 2002.